

Citrus & Avocado Planting and Care

Citrus and Avocado trees are well adapted to most areas of San Diego County, from the coast to the inland foothills. They prefer full sun and well-drained soils so don't plant them in poorly draining soil. For five-gallon size trees, the planting hole should be about 18"-20" wide and the same depth. Fifteen gallon sizes should be approximately 24" x 24". If you live near the ocean, protect them from the salty winds from the west, and from frost in inland areas.

Mix some soil conditioner in with the native soil at the time of planting at about 50 percent soil and 50 percent soil amendment. Place some of this mix in the bottom of the hole so the root ball is at the same level as the surrounding soil or slightly higher. Be sure not to plant them too deep and have soil accumulate on the trunk of the tree. The first roots should be at soil level or no more than one half inch below the soil level. It is usually a good idea to make a berm about 3" high two feet from the trunk so you can deep water the tree easily. In the beginning the trees should be watered deeply about two times a week. Soil and weather conditions might play a part in this, so watch the moisture content of the soil carefully for at least the first six months. Gradually you can decrease the frequency as the roots take up water over a larger area. An established tree may need water only every two to three weeks after it is a year old.

When choosing an area for your new tree, keep in mind the best location is full sun or at least full sun for 2/3 of the day. Be sure it has ample room to grow, as standard trees will spread 15' to 20' and dwarf trees 10' to 12' if left untrimmed. You can keep them smaller by pruning, if you desire. It is best if you do not try to grow anything under the tree such as lawns, vegetables, shrubs, etc. as they will require different watering conditions. Just leave the area bare under the canopy of the trees or mulch with bark to reduce run off. Feed the trees with citrus and avocado fertilizer every three months. Apply the fertilizer as close to the "dripline" of the tree as possible.

Insects are usually not a big problem; however, there are several you should look for. Aphids, mites, whitefly and scale are the more common ones. If you see ants, it is a good indication other insects are living in the tree. Investigate and correct before it becomes too much of a problem. If you have a question about insects, bring a sample

into the nursery so we can see what you are concerned about. In most cases there are ways to control them without endangering the fruit.

Sometimes citrus may not be sweet enough. This is usually due to lack of “trace elements” in San Diego soils. In addition to regular feeding with citrus food, you may need to apply trace elements twice a year. These micronutrients are what your trees need to improve the fruit’s flavor.